



GLENN L. CLAYTON II
CHIEF JUDGE

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COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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ARNOLD B. KASSABIAN
1976 - 1994

PHILIP N. BROPHY
1974 - 1980

March 19, 2014

Mr. Kevin Bell and the Human Services Council,

On behalf of the Fairfax County Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Judges and the Court Services Unit, I want to thank you for the opportunity to be heard on the County Executive's potential reductions for FY 15, specific to human service delivery in Fairfax County and the Court Service's programs included on the reduction list. Now that I have been presented with the list of potential reductions, I am in a better position to provide the Council with constructive and pointed comments. The Human Services Council has been extremely supportive of the Court and Court Services in past budget reduction discussions, and it is my hope that your support will remain strong.

The Judges and the CSU were delighted with the proposed expansion of Behavioral Health Services for Youth and Families and the County Executive's decision to include \$1,000,000 in his proposed budget in support of such services. Unfortunately, it is the juvenile justice system that is frequently tasked with assisting youth and families in accessing mental health or substance abuse services for the first time. The ability to provide early intervention services to youth and families in need would reduce the over reliance on the juvenile justice system to connect youth and families with appropriate services. There is no doubt that the ability to provide effective interventions to youth and families will not only reduce criminal activity, but also the dependence on the juvenile justice system for mental health and substance abuse services. As the March 17 report says, *"Without this funding, the youth and families in need of service will not be reached."* From our perspective, removing those funds is both unfortunate and contrary to our responsibility to provide services to youth and families in need in our community.

During my years on the bench I have witnessed the CSU deal with continued budget reductions. Frankly, I'm not sure how they have been able to meet budget reductions while maintaining a high level of service delivery while meeting the core mandates as enumerated in the Code of Virginia. I truly believe the CSU can no longer absorb any further budget reductions without cheapening service delivery and without putting individual and community safety at significant risk. My review of the "Potential Reductions for FY15" gives the court strong reason for concern. Three of the programs listed, Stronger Together & Visitation Exchange, Community Services Program, and the Volunteer Coordinator position, all are essential to maintain effective

delivery of services to the residents of our community and to meet our role of providing community protection.

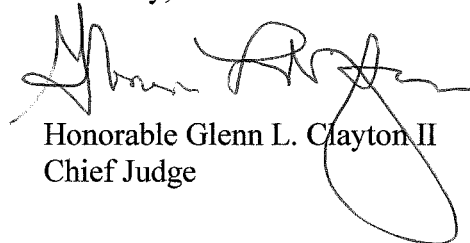
Without the Supervised Visitation & Exchange Program, 191 children in Fairfax County in FY12 would not have had the opportunity to experience emotionally and physically safe, supervised visitations and exchanges among custodial parents. To my knowledge no other county agency offers such programming. Over 700 families have been served since the inception of the program. This unique program has become an essential component in handling custody and visitation matters that involve parents with a history of domestic violence and family abuse.

Similarly, the ability to have youth perform community service in a safe and secure environment is an essential and highly utilized sanction for the Court. Youth fulfilling their community service provides a sense of accountability for the youth's actions, while making 'whole' the community he/she has offended. The court needs to reiterate what is contained in the March 17 report, *"Being the only program of its nature in the County, losing this program would have a significantly negative impact on the community and the core of JDRDC."*

Finally, the elimination of the Volunteer Coordinator position reduces the agency's ability to utilize volunteers and interns that provide additional, sorely needed, sources of labor for the agency. This position recruits, interviews, conducts background checks, and places potential volunteers with staff across the agency. It takes about six to eight weeks to process a volunteer's application. If the position is eliminated, the agency risks the applicants' loss of interest and/or the risk that the applicant will seek placement elsewhere, due to increased wait times. In FY 2012, 143 volunteers provided the Court Services Unit (CSU) with 15,134 hours of service valued at approximately \$315,945. If eliminated, there would no longer be a single point of contact for the recruitment and monitoring of volunteers. This reduction would jeopardize the existence of CSU programs such as the Volunteer Interpreter Program, Attorney Advisements, and Stronger Together Supervised Visitation/ Exchange that depend heavily, and in some cases, solely on volunteers.

Again, thank you for all your support over the years and for your anticipated support in current budget discussions. Fairfax County can be proud of its human services delivery system. But, it clearly needs to grow, given continuing demand; and it most certainly cannot endure any further budget reductions without having a negative impact on those residents who need our assistance the most.

Sincerely,



Honorable Glenn L. Clayton II
Chief Judge